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WORK AND LEISURE IN JAPAN

SUMMARY

Japan's reputation as a nation of workaholics, while of relatively recent vintage, is believed widely throughout Japan and abroad. While hours devoted to a paying job are greater in Japan than elsewhere, a broader view of work — as opposed to leisure and daily needs such as sleep — suggests that the number of hours worked in Japan is not obviously longer than elsewhere. Work hours, however defined, have declined in the past 20 years, albeit with considerable year-to-year variation. Conversely, the number of leisure hours has increased. The Japanese government's efforts to reduce further the paid workweek, if successful, may widen the existing gap between total hours worked by men, who work mainly for pay, and women, who are far more likely to work without pay in the home. Alternatively, the division of tasks between men and women could be altered. Whether changes in work hours and the division of labor would reduce the total number of hours worked is more problematic. A rapid move toward shorter working hours could increase the amount of unpaid labor or increase the number of people working.

The Context

Edith Cresson, the French prime minister who complained last year that Japanese employees work like ants, might be shocked to learn that Japanese historians have noted that some farming communities during the Tokugawa period, which ended 124 years ago, took 90 days off during the growing season alone. Or that 19th-century visitors to Japan were no more impressed by the Japanese work ethic. Compared to workers in their home countries, these Western visitors said, Japanese laborers appeared lazy and untutored in the requirements of a modern industrial society.

The former French leader's remarks unleashed a flurry of comment in Japan, most of it critical. Taking a somewhat different tack, Shogo Imoto, a writer for *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, the largest Japanese economic daily, agreed with Ms. Cresson but pointed out that only 20 percent of the ants work in a typical colony.[1]

Mr. Imoto's argument notwithstanding, most Japanese and foreign analysts hew closer to the view of Ms. Cresson than to the 19th-century visitors to Japan. A *Time*/Cable News Network poll this past February found that 94 percent of Americans believed Japanese to be competitive and hardworking; only 15 percent of the Japanese surveyed used comparable language to describe Americans. Public officials in Japan sometimes have expressed similar sentiments. In January, shortly after President Bush visited Japan, Yoshio Sakurauchi, the speaker of the Diet, reportedly claimed that American workers were not only lazy but often illiterate as well. Then in February Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa was interpreted as having essentially the same opinion when he argued that the American determination to "produce goods and create value has loosened sharply." Although the prime minister's comments, when viewed in context, were actually about the kinds of work Americans do rather than the work effort, they nonetheless helped fan the perception among Americans that Japanese view this country's workers as lazy.

The perception that Japanese workers are highly industrious compared to their counterparts in other economically advanced countries has important ramifications for U.S.-Japan relations. Many Americans worry that Japan simply outproduces this country. That result obviously is more likely the harder Japanese employees work. An additional American concern stems from the large trade surplus that Japan continues to have with the United States. The surplus results from the high level of savings in Japan. Since asset managers and individuals want the greatest possible return, a significant portion of these savings are directed overseas. Given the huge budget deficit and the associated high interest rates in the United States, those returns often have been in this country. The resultant demand for dollars to purchase U.S. financial assets and the supply of yen that results from the dollar demand tend to drive the value of the yen down against the dollar. As a result, Japanese exports are larger and imports lower than they would be if the savings rate were lower. Washington officials figure that if working hours were reduced in Japan, consumers there would have more opportunities to spend, thereby reducing the high household savings rate, leading in turn to a smaller outbound capital flow, a stronger yen and a smaller bilateral imbalance.

Sometimes this argument is made in a somewhat different, more intuitive way. If Japanese workers spend more time in leisure activities, they will buy more leisure-related products. As experts at leisure, this argument continues, Americans are particularly adept at producing these goods. Hence, the trade imbalance will decline as U.S. exports to Japan rise. This argument, however, inaccurately equates an expansion of U.S. exports to Japan with a decline in the trade imbalance. An increase in exports would lead to a stronger dollar, other things being equal, that would lift imports, leaving the direction of the surplus unclear. In fact, the bilateral trade imbalance is unlikely to diminish absent such macroeconomic changes as altered savings levels in both countries or changes in government spending and taxation policies.

American interest in the work/leisure issue in Japan also is stimulated by usually implicit but, as with the comments of Mr. Sakurauchi, sometimes explicit comparisons between the United States and Japan. In addition, some American analysts take a cue from the large U.S. trade deficit with Japan — and the seeming inability of American firms to compete with Japanese rivals — to conclude that average Americans make an inadequate work effort. However, this argument falters on the same grounds as the above contention that a simple increase in U.S. exports to Japan would reduce the trade deficit. A greater work effort in this country would not reduce the trade imbalance unless it were accompanied by macroeconomic policy changes in the United States, Japan or both.

The view that Americans work too little seems to run counter to an opinion that has spread in recent years — that Americans are working too hard. As described by Harvard University economist Juliet Schor, this view would seem to imply that work hours in the United States should be

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reduced.[2] Data on hours worked for pay, however, show that Americans, while putting in more hours than most of their European counterparts, work far fewer hours each year than the average Japanese worker (see Tables 1 and 2), at least in manufacturing. (For further information concerning these statistics, see *JEI Report* No. 11A, March 16, 1990, and No. 8B, February 28, 1992.) International comparisons show that more frequent holidays in Japan are more than offset by fewer weekend days off, less paid leave and fewer other absences.

As Table 2 indicates, statistics regarding hours on the job provide no clear sign that the number of hours worked in Japan is converging toward the levels that prevail in other nations.

Table 1: **International Comparison of Manufacturing Working Hours, 1989**

(in days except for total hours worked)

	Total Hours Worked	Nonwork Weekends	National Holidays	Paid Leave	Other Absence
Japan	2,159	85	20	9	3
United Kingdom	1,989	104	8	24	11
United States	1,957	104	9	19	6
France	1,646	104	8	26	16
West Germany	1,638	104	11	29	11

Source: Ministry of Labor

Table 2: **Working Hours in Japan, 1970-91***

(average hours per year)

Year	Total	Scheduled	Overtime
1970	2,239	2,039	200
1975	2,064	1,937	127
1980	2,108	1,946	162
1981	2,101	1,940	161
1982	2,096	1,939	157
1983	2,098	1,937	161
1984	2,116	1,945	171
1985	2,110	1,932	178
1986	2,102	1,930	172
1987	2,111	1,933	178
1988	2,111	1,922	189
1989	2,088	1,898	190
1990	2,052	1,866	186
1991**	2,022	1,847	175

*Based on Ministry of Labor survey of companies with 30 or more regular workers. Part-time workers are excluded from the survey, as are agricultural and forestry workers and public-sector employees.
**Preliminary.

Source: Ministry of Labor

Significantly, though, the results are influenced heavily by the business cycle, making an analysis of the trend difficult. For example, work hours declined in 1986, a recession year, as employers chose to cut back both scheduled hours and overtime. As the recovery took hold in 1987, however, work time jumped closer to the decade's peak level, reached in 1984. While the decline in hours in 1989 and 1990 in the face of continuing economic expansion is consistent with a long-run trend toward fewer hours, the continued drop in 1991 resulted at least in part from slowing economic activity. Based on data for the first three months of 1992, which show overtime hours down as much as 20 percent from a year earlier, the total number of hours well may fall again this year. Most analysts would attribute this reduction, too, to the slowdown in the economy more than to a long-run trend.

The uncertain movement in the number of working hours comes despite consistent internal pressure to reduce that figure. For example, the second Maekawa Report, released in April 1987 by a blue-ribbon panel of experts headed by former Bank of Japan governor Haruo Maekawa, stated that "an effort should be made to reduce Japanese working hours to about 1,800 hours per year as soon as possible and no later than the end of the century (as with five-day workweeks and 20 paid days off per year)" (see *JEI Report* No. 39A, October 14, 1988). On the basis of the data in Table 1 the rate of decline in labor hours between 1987 and 1991 will leave Japanese wage earners working for more than 1,800 hours even at the end of this century.

Government officials and interested trading partners are not the only ones calling for fewer hours on the job in Japan. For example, in recent years Japanese labor unions have made shorter workweeks one of their key objectives (see *JEI Report* No. 6B, February 14, 1992, and No. 13B, April 3, 1992). The unions were partially successful in the labor negotiations this spring. Among other concessions, they won a pledge from automotive makers to reduce working hours over a period of two years from the current average of 2,200 hours a year to below 2,000.

The above comparisons of hours worked say nothing, of course, about work effort during the hours people are on the job. International comparisons of productivity — which reflect individual work effort, the capital stock used by employees and other factors — continue to show American productivity to be the world's highest, particularly outside manufacturing. In February the Ministry of Labor estimated American productivity per hour worked to be 9 percent to 62 percent higher than that of Japanese workers. The wide range was attributable to the way in which prices and wages are measured. (For further details concerning productivity comparisons, see *JEI Report* No. 4A, January 31, 1992.) Numerous observers of working conditions in Japanese offices have noted that many of the extra hours devoted to unpaid overtime in such situations involve scant real work and may represent little more than waiting a socially acceptable interval before heading home.

The comparisons in Table 1 also do not take account of labor force participation rates; the average hourly figure represents time spent on the job only for those actually employed. Arguably, an American family where the husband and the wife both work 40 hours per week face a greater burden regarding work hours than a Japanese family where the husband works 60 hours per week and the wife stays at home; the statistics, however, would show that average hours worked were 50 percent higher in Japan.

Of course, both Americans and Japanese could work too hard or too long. If so, the Japanese goal ought to be significantly fewer work hours than the present U.S. level. The frantic pace of work that Harvard's Ms. Schor describes probably strikes a responsive chord with many Americans, who may find it hard to believe that, given universal human frailty, the Japanese work effort could be that much greater than theirs.

Time Allocation Studies

A recent study by two University of Michigan professors helps resolve the apparent contradiction between the image of the harried American as described by Ms. Schor and the easygoing lifestyle that the statistics in Table 1 seem to imply. In contrast to the estimated hours of work based

on wages shown in Tables 1 and 2, the study by Frank Stafford and F. Thomas Juster relies on surveys in which the respondents kept diaries of how they spent their entire day — not just their paid working hours.[3]

This more comprehensive measure of how time is used is clearly relevant for assessing the diligence with which an individual — or a nation — works. In incorporating averages of the population, and not just the employed population, the Stafford-Juster data account for differing labor participation rates among nations. By including household work, the researchers allow for the real possibility that a housewife may work far harder during the course of the day than her counterpart in the paid work force.

The hours of work shown in Table 2 may not accurately reflect actual work-hour comparisons if large amounts of work are done without pay in some nations. By contrast, the Stafford-Juster approach allows for different patterns of paid and unpaid work that reflect after-tax compensation, a factor of considerable potential importance. For example, a nation with a high marginal tax rate may well find that its population opts to work fewer hours for pay. To see this idea, consider an extreme example. If the tax rate on wages were 100 percent, virtually no one would offer to work for pay inasmuch as all their wages would be taken by the state. Just to survive, the population would be forced into a pattern of self-reliance; at least one member of every household would have to learn to handle such jobs as plumber, farmer and banker. In short, high tax rates can divert labor from paid to unpaid work.

Messrs. Stafford and Juster use surveys generally taken during the 1980s in a variety of countries and make relatively modest adjustments to arrive at data that are comparable across nations. The statistics reflect the fact that labor participation rates differ by sex and nation; women average fewer hours for pay but more hours in unpaid housework in every country.[4] The results, shown in Table 3, are consistent with one of the findings from Table 1, which is that employed Japanese, particularly men, put in more hours on the job than their counterparts in the other sample countries. The top line of the table contains the most important numbers, however. When all forms of labor — including unpaid housework — are included, Japanese men work fewer hours than either Japanese women or American men. In fact, they are second only to American women among the men and the women of the six surveyed countries in the brevity of their workweek by this comprehensive measure. In other words, the study suggests that Japanese men enjoy more leisure, including time spent for personal care, than most of their colleagues in other countries.

The main explanation, of course, is housework. (Housework includes such tasks as mowing grass, doing laundry, cooking and household repairs.) According to the survey, Japanese men do very little such work, averaging 3.5 hours per week, only 39.4 percent as much as men in the Soviet Union, the next-to-lowest country on this basis. While few American wives would accuse their husbands of doing excessive work around the home, U.S. men do nearly four times as much in a typical week as their Japanese counterparts.

Among women the pattern is different. Japanese women spent 42 minutes more per week in paid employment, including commuting time, and 30 minutes longer doing housework than their American counterparts, according to Messrs. Stafford and Juster. However, the U.S. data are for 1981, the Japanese data for 1985. Rising female labor force participation rates in the United States may have pushed paid employment time per week to a level at least equal to that of Japan by 1985.

Messrs. Stafford and Juster also present data that show trends over time. On this basis Japanese men are not converging with the practices of their male counterparts elsewhere, at least not obviously. Between 1965 and 1985, the latest year for which comparable figures are available, hours at work dropped 10 percent in Japan but 15 percent in the United States. However, housework hours rose 20 percent in the United States against 25 percent in Japan. Among Danish men, by contrast, hours at work (including commuting time) dropped 20 percent, while housework increased 246 percent over the slightly longer 1964-87 period.[5] Among females, work at a paying job dropped among

Table 3: **Use of Time in Various Countries**

(hours per week)

	Japan, 1985		United States, 1981		Other Countries[1]	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Activity						
Total Work	55.5	55.6	57.8	54.4	61.3	63.0
Market Work[2]	52.0	24.6	44.0	23.9	47.1	32.7
Of which: Commuting	4.5	1.2	3.5	2.0	4.0	2.6
Housework	3.5	31.0	13.8	30.5	14.2	30.3
Personal Care[3]	72.4	72.1	68.2	71.6	71.3	72.5
Leisure	40.3	40.3	41.8	41.9	35.5	32.4
Adult Education	1.2	2.2	0.6	0.4	1.2	1.5
Social Interaction	8.0	7.0	14.9	17.6	9.2	8.9
Active Leisure[4]	5.3	3.6	5.6	4.2	4.5	4.0
Passive Leisure	25.5	27.5	20.8	19.8	20.7	18.0
Of which: TV	17.3	21.4	12.7	11.5	12.0	9.7
Total	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0

[1]U.S.S.R. (1985), Finland (1979), Hungary (1977) and Sweden (1984).
[2]Work for which one is paid and unpaid overtime.
[3]Includes eating at home, sleep and similar activities.
[4]Includes religious activities, sports and similar activities.

Source: F. Thomas Juster and Frank P. Stafford, "The Allocation of Time: Empirical Findings, Behavioral Models, and Problems of Measurement," *Journal of Economic Literature*, June 1991, p. 475.

Japanese women 26 percent while rising 26 percent among American women. Housework hours slipped a mere 1.6 percent in Japan but fell 27 percent in the United States. In short, Japanese women appeared to increasingly specialize in housework during this period, while American women were moving into the paid labor force and out of unpaid work.

The best publicized portion of work by Messrs. Stafford and Juster involved comparisons of school-age children in the United States and Japan. Both market and nonmarket work is relatively small for primary, junior high and senior high school students in both countries. The biggest difference is that Japanese students spend 72 percent more time in primary school and more than twice as much time in junior and senior high school doing school work either under a teacher's supervision at school or at home. American students spend more time on sports in all grade levels; in high school, where the difference is greatest, U.S. students spend more than 10 times as much time as Japanese students, seven hours per week versus 42 minutes per week. (The data on school-age children do not differentiate by sex.) Comparative data for college-age students are not available; however, professors and students with experience in both countries generally argue that American students attend class more frequently and work harder outside class.

College students notwithstanding, the numbers appear to suggest that Japanese children are preparing for a world of work, while American children are preparing for a world of both work and leisure. To put the matter somewhat differently, the priorities of the younger generation point toward ever-increasing Japanese international competitiveness, other factors equal, and relatively little time devoted to active leisure activities, such as sports.

While Messrs. Stafford and Juster use as their basis studies that were designed specifically to be comparable internationally, some problems remain, particularly with respect to trends over time. The demographic profile of the Japanese population underwent a considerable shift during the period in question. For example, the proportion of women aged 20 to 24 years, where labor force participation rates are highest, declined from 12.1 percent of all women in 1965 to 8.3 percent in 1985. Such demographic changes explain the apparent paradox that labor force participation rates for most age groups in Japan increased, even though the overall labor force participation rate for women dropped from 50.6 percent to 48.7 percent — apparently confirming the above result that the hours of paid employment for women declined over the 1965-85 period. The rise in participation rates in most age groups between 1965 and 1985 implies that hours of paid work per week would have increased in the absence of demographic changes.

Japanese Update: The 1990 Study

The Japanese data used in the Stafford and Juster work came from a survey conducted at five-year intervals by the state-owned Nihon Hoso Kyokai (Japan Broadcasting Corp.). In February NHK released its latest survey. While the results cannot be easily compared with the adjusted American and Japanese data cited earlier, time trends can be constructed using the original data from earlier NHK surveys.[6]

The results are shown in Table 4. As in Table 3, the numbers represent the hours and the tenths of hours spent *on average* on each activity each week, with some individuals spending far more time and others far less. (A tenth of a percent of the population claimed to have avoided sleep, with nonparticipation rates equally low for eating, but nearly 90 percent of the participants said they spent no time engaged in competitive leisure activities.) NHK's survey was based on diaries kept by 90,240 people over the age of 10 between October 15 and October 28, 1990. By comparison, the 1985 survey polled 14,400 people during the same month. NHK distributed the diaries a few days before, and collected the diaries a few days after, the survey period. The sample was constructed to be a cross section of economic groups and regions of Japan.

The table shows that time devoted to work, whether broadly or narrowly defined, did drop modestly between 1970 and 1990. Broadly defined work, for example, declined 6.7 percent. Conversely, leisure hours increased substantially but not dramatically, with the proportion of leisure spent watching television declining somewhat. By contrast, the amount of time devoted to noncompetitive sports activity increased from 24 minutes in 1970 to half an hour in 1990, a 25 percent increase. Note that the figures represent an average over the entire Japanese population older than 10 years. A relatively small part of the population spent any time at all in noncompetitive sports activities; however, those who participated in noncompetitive sports on Sunday, for example, averaged more than two hours each on that day.

The number of hours spent studying increased significantly between 1970 and 1990, a conclusion rendered more meaningful by the demographic changes that reduced the relative importance of school-age groups in the overall population. (The data do not differentiate between adult education and that of elementary, intermediate, high school and college students.) These figures suggest that the apparent trends in education-related international competitiveness mentioned above are not likely to be reversed soon.

More generally, the rates of change implied by Table 4 suggest that the international comparisons shown in Table 3 remain valid. While comprehensive data by gender are not available

Table 4: **Japan's Changing Use of Time, 1970-90**

(hours per week)

Activity	1970	1980	1990
Total Work	58.1	55.6	54.2
Paid Work	38.3	35.3	35.6
Working Hours	35.8	32.2	32.8
Commuting Time	2.4	3.0	2.9
Unpaid Work	19.8	20.3	18.6
Housekeeping	18.6	18.4	17.1
Other[1]	1.3	2.0	1.5
Student Activity	8.9	9.1	10.1
Study	7.8	8.0	9.0
Commuting Time	1.1	1.1	1.1
Personal Care[2]	74.5	76.2	73.9
Of which: Sleep	56.3	56.1	54.5
Free Time	28.0	30.7	32.1
Of which: Television	22.3	21.0	22.1

[1]Estimated. Examples include parent-teacher meetings, volunteer activities, attendance at civic group meetings and socializing with co-workers off the job.
[2]Includes sleep, meals, grooming and dressing, and inactivity for medical reasons.

Source: Compiled from data in NHK Yoron Chosa-bu (ed.), *Nihon-jin no Seikatsu Jikan* (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1992), pp. 372-373.

for 1990, statistics differentiating ***employed*** men and women in 1990 indicate that the roles of men and women in doing housework have changed little since 1985. If anything, other evidence suggests that the division of household labor between husband and wife has become even more pronounced in the past three to five years. When workers, typically male, are transferred in Japan the wife and children sometimes stay behind, often for the assumed educational benefit of the child. The number of such *tanshin-funin* (literally, unaccompanied transfer) families increased by 30,000 between 1987 and 1990 to total 205,000, according to Ministry of Labor estimates; some evidence suggests that the actual numbers could be far higher. The MOL figure represents nearly 1 percent of all male employees and a much higher percentage of those with children. The jump between 1987 and 1990 occurred despite an increasingly tight labor market; some reports in early 1992 suggested even more such transfers could be expected this year as firms adjust to the economic downturn by relocating newly redundant workers. Whatever the reason, *tanshin-funin* shifts more of the child-rearing and housework responsibilities onto the mother and increases the hours spent on travel to and from one's home on weekends that realistically should be counted as commuting time. Not surprisingly, studies of *tanshin-funin* families have revealed high degrees of stress related to both time and money.

Implications of Japanese Leisure and Labor Choices

Whether because of the division of labor between men and women or the enormous energy devoted to study, Japanese households probably remain distinctive by international standards. Japanese men spend more hours working away from the home and fewer doing housework. The

heavy burdens of maintaining the home remain on the shoulders of women far more than in other countries. The net result is that Japanese women may work harder on balance, and their husbands less hard, than their American counterparts, although the differences are small. For Japanese men and women in total, hours of paid employment are higher, and time spent on unpaid work lower, than in other industrial nations.

This division between paid and unpaid work could have several causes. One, implied above, could be the relatively low marginal tax rates on personal income in Japan. To the extent that tax cheating is widespread among some high-income individuals, actual marginal rates could be lower still. Goods and services that would be produced by households themselves in other industrialized nations may be purchased in Japan since the seller need include in the sales price only a relatively small amount to cover any ensuing personal income tax and the buyer has only a modest incentive to forgo paid employment to produce the service himself or herself. Not surprisingly, therefore, Japan has more restaurants than any other country, providing meals that would be eaten at home elsewhere. (However, since few restaurants attract families, the burden on housewives is reduced only marginally.)

The sharp division of labor between the sexes could result from sex discrimination in Japan. To the extent that wives are excluded from educational and job opportunities, their wages are lower than otherwise. A rational household could decide that the wife's unpaid work at home makes sense for the family when in the absence of such discrimination it would not have. Husbands, whose wages are inflated by sex discrimination, have an incentive to work long hours and, thus, have better excuses than their counterparts in other countries to avoid housework.

More generally, the apparent Japanese emphasis on producing and buying goods and services of high quality may result in part from labor and leisure choices. To the extent that the labor of others is cheap in an after-tax sense in Japan, consumers have an incentive to buy relatively expensive, high-quality products to minimize their own labor for repairs or time spent in the repair shop.

Similar logic also may help explain areas in which Japanese service is of poor quality. The large number of total hours worked by Japanese women may result in part from using time rather than money to procure goods and services. For example, Japanese washing machines, although inexpensive, require far more effort than those in most other industrial nations, and everyday transactions at a bank take more time; both laundry and banking are performed mainly by women in Japan. Less sex discrimination, which would make such time-consuming tasks more costly in terms of forgone wages, might improve the quality of goods and services used primarily by women.

As noted above, official policies favor reducing the paid workweek in Japan. While this move sometimes is linked with increased leisure, less of one activity does not necessarily imply more of the other. In the long run fewer hours worked mean lower real wages than otherwise. To the extent that this occurs, Japanese families will be less able to buy the goods and the services they otherwise could afford. They will have more time to obtain these goods and services with their own efforts, however. This could mean, for example, less eating out and more meals at home. It is no accident that Scandinavian countries, where paid work hours are short, are well-known for furniture that customers carry home and assemble themselves. Not surprisingly, Japanese customers up to now generally have preferred home delivery of furniture (and many other goods) despite the lofty prices that this high quality of service entails; shorter working hours could alter that preference.

In short, if working hours become significantly shorter in Japan, household tasks could increase. To the extent that the division of labor between men and women remains unaltered, the burden on women could increase. Alternatively, men could find themselves doing much more housework, as their counterparts in Scandinavia and elsewhere do. If shorter paid workweeks led to inefficient provision of services by household members rather than the skilled professionals who had provided the services in the past, the overall number of hours of paid and unpaid labor in Japan could even increase.

Japan's record over the past 20 years of less work and more leisure is a predictable consequence of its high rate of economic growth. Higher real income levels have permitted Japanese households to take part of the gain in the form of leisure — in effect, to buy leisure at the cost of forgoing some increase in wages. A shift to a significantly shorter workweek over a short period of time would have different consequences. In the absence of a jump in productivity, yearly real wages would fall and households would be forced to give up some, or all, of their gain in leisure through the purchase of a cheaper basket of goods and services; that would imply more of their own labor. When the option of fewer paid working hours is put this way, it is a much less appealing choice. Should the Japanese population nevertheless proceed down this path, it would have profound implications for relationships within Japanese households and perhaps even for the quality of Japanese goods and services.

Given these considerations, reductions in the workweek in Japan are likely to proceed slowly, as much from caution within households as from employer resistance. Even if paid employment hours were to drop, overall leisure may not increase and, with it, the opportunities for spending and dissaving that American policymakers have anticipated. In any case, patterns of work in Japan — if not the level of overall work activity — are likely to remain highly distinctive by international standards.

For further information, contact **Douglas Ostrom**.

Tooru Ando provided research assistance.

Notes

[1]Shogo Imoto, "Not All Japanese, or Ants, Really Work So Hard," Asia Foundation Translation Service Center #1552, May 4, 1992.

[2]Juliet Schor, *The Overworked American* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1991).

[3]Frank Stafford and F. Thomas Juster, "The Allocation of Time: Empirical Findings, Behavioral Models, and Problems of Measurement," *Journal of Economic Literature*, June 1991, pp. 471-522.

[4]The data for Japan are primarily from Naomichi Nakanishi and Yutaka Suzuki, *Japanese Time Use in 1985* (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Kyokai, 1986).

[5]Stafford and Juster, *op.cit.*, p. 477.

[6]NHK Yoron Chosa-bu (ed.), *Nihon-jin no Seikatsu Jikan* (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1992).

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